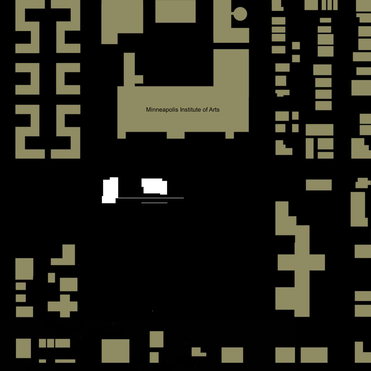
The Labyrinth Studies: Exhibiting Culture Through Art & Architecture

CITY: MINNEAPOLIS, MN
With an estimated population of 392,880, Minneapolis is the largest city in the state of Minnesota. Minneapolis is known for its cultural organizations that draw creative people and audiences to the city for theater, visual art, writing, and music.



Over centuries we have rid ourselves of the indirect path, for the supposed superiority of the straight line. We moved from the meandering to the linear, from the complex to the singular, and from the curved and sensual to the straight and narrow. By implementing qualities of the labyrinth into our built environment we can begin to experience and perceive space and architecture in ways that resonate with that of past cultures. The Labyrinth Studies: Exhibiting Culture through Art & Architecture utilizes the properties of transformation exuberated by the labyrinth, its ubiquitous nature and relation to the arts, along with the present cultural characteristics represented by the selected region, to explore architecture's ability to resonate amid the developing ethics and beliefs it embodies. This thesis will be explored through the design of a public art center located Minneapolis, MN.

NEIGHBORHOOD: WHITTIER
The Whittier neighborhood is known for many diverse restaurants, coffee shops and food markets. With 13,689 residing in the area consisting of 49% non-white ethnicity, it is the highest populated and most culturally diverse in the city. Whittier is also home to the Minneapolis Institute of Arts, the Minneapolis College of Art and Design, and the Children's Theatre Company.

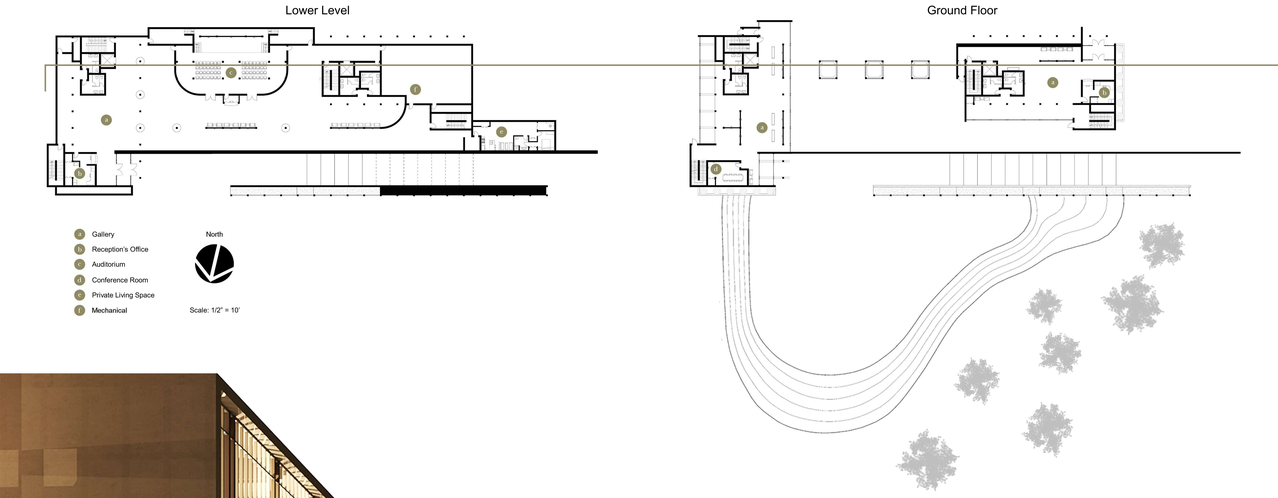
SITE: WASHBURN FAIR OAKS PARK
Washburn Fair Oaks is a 7.5 acre park home to the Whittier neighborhood of Minneapolis Minnesota, and located just across the street from the Minneapolis Institute of the Arts. The land was purchased by the Minneapolis Park Board in 1911 with plans to be transformed into a landscaped plaza adjacent to the Minneapolis Institute of Arts. Since the park boards acquisition of Washburn Fair Oaks several plans of action have been discussed, and even developed, but to this day it remains an open green space in the center of the city. Today Washburn Fair Oaks Park acts as a pedestrian link connecting downtown Minneapolis with its surrounding communities. With the city of Minneapolis having already developed and approved a plan of renovation for Washburn Fair Oaks Park, I propose that a public center for art and public art studios be implemented into the existing green space, as an extension to the Minneapolis Institute of Arts.

THE LABYRINTH:
The labyrinth is considered one of the oldest architectural precedents available for study, and is resonate with the mythical origins of architecture. The Labyrinth, as depicted in Greek Mythology, was an elaborate structure designed and built by the legendary artificer Daedalus to simultaneously orientate and re orientate on a single path from its center.

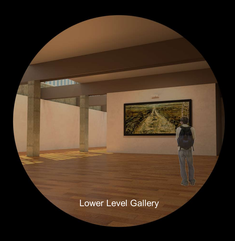
WALKING THE LABYRINTH:
Today the labyrinth is used by many cultures as a metaphor for spiritual enlightenment and a powerful tool for transformation. A key reason people walk the labyrinth is to experience the simultaneity of past and present. In walking the labyrinth we associate with other cultures and periods of time, while also linking the body and soul.

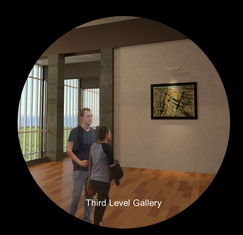
SAINTE MARIE DE LA TOURETTE:
An instance of the labyrinth evoking the experiential qualities of a cultural paradigm through an architectural framework can be found in Le Corbusier's Sainte Marie de la Tourette. The space is rigorous and demanding, and is always discomforting in a way that vibrates with spirituality. La Tourette adopts the physical characteristics of disorientation and reorientation, by implementing instances of familiar materiality/light qualities, repetitive programmatic layout, and acoustic reverberations. Ultimately transforming the inhabitant into a participant of the rituals which the space supports.

THE ARTEFACT:
The artefact asks the relinquishment of the audience's cell phone, as representation of a cultural engagement, as cell phones are deposited into the vessels they take form of the labyrinth. Light flashes and diffuses while rhythmically moving on and off beat with the sound of footsteps and trumpets; these continued reverberations blend each vessel from a singular entity into a whole. The artefact was used to philosophically and historically ground the project, and can begin to anticipate the familiarity of the labyrinth and the rhythm of orientation and disorientation it exemplifies.



How does art posses the ability to resonate amongst an overwhelming increase of acquired information and technology? What is present in any meaningful work of art is the experience of the labyrinth, which resonates with the very origins of western art and architecture. Daedalus' mythical creation of coinciding path and boundary has been reinterpreted for millennial in manifestation of city, life, art, and architecture. The strength of such works is that it epitomizes orientation and disorientation, revealing and concealing elicited in the experience of poetic works. Achieving symbolism all while leaving questions of meaning open, and resonating with the very origins of mythical belief. My public art center attempts to emulate the properties of the labyrinth by utilizing the design techniques tested in my artefact and made apparent by Sainte Marie de la Tourette.





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How can the ubiquitous nature of the labyrinth continue to inform the cultural experience of art & architecture?